

Wings of Freedom Tour in Alabama

by

Ken Philippart

Images by Arloe Mayne and Ken Philippart

The Collings Foundation's 2016 Wings of Freedom Tour brought legendary World War II aircraft to Alabama from October 26 – 30. The tour touched down at Pryor Field Regional Airport (KDCU) near Decatur on October 26 and departed for Shelby County Airport (KEET) near Birmingham on October 28. The tour departed Alabama on October 30.

The tour featured the foundation's B-17G Flying Fortress *Nine O' Nine*, B-24J Liberator *Witchcraft*, B-25J Mitchell *Tondelayo* and TF-51D Mustang. These aircraft were on static display throughout the event and available for walk through tours also. Visitors could also purchase rides in these iconic warbirds as well as memorabilia. Locally-owned vintage aircraft like the T-6 and PT-17 also joined the tour on static display.



The Collings Foundation is a non-profit, educational foundation founded in 1979 to organize and support living history events and the preservation, exhibition and interaction of historical artifacts. According to their website, the "Wings of Freedom Tour" has two goals: to honor the sacrifices made by our veterans that allow us to enjoy our freedom; and to educate the visitors, especially younger Americans, about our national history and heritage. The Foundation encourages people to tour the planes, talk to the veterans

who come to visit the aircraft, and participate in a flight experience." After 26 years at over 3,000 airports across the United States, an estimated 3.5 million people have seen these fully restored historic aircraft.

That number now includes members of the Greater Huntsville Section. Section members admired, toured and took pictures of the venerable aircraft. Ken Philippart flew in the B-25J and found the flight in *Tondelayo* to



be an interesting counterpoint to his September flight in the B-17G *Aluminum Overcast* (see the [B-17 article](#) here).



The 2016 Wings of Freedom Tour was a fun and educational opportunity for AIAA members in both the Huntsville and Birmingham areas to get up close to and even fly on several of the legendary aircraft from WWII right in our own backyards. The 2016 tour concluded in early November but will resume in 2017 with tour stops yet to be announced.

See <http://www.collingsfoundation.org/events/category/wings-of-freedom-tour/> for details.